

transmission. The 82% of those affected, however, namely homosexual and bisexual men and drug users, merit only a few specific paragraphs. The other chapters are devoted to describing a San Franciscan style comprehensive care system as well as the neoplasms, infections, and other manifestations associated with AIDS or HIV infection. There is a concluding chapter on vaccine mechanisms with particular reference to HIV. The largest contribution is by the editor himself on the detection and pathogenesis of HIV, which has a staggering 296 references. This chapter provides a brief history of the early discoveries in virology and a succinct account of the up to date knowledge of the virology of HIV infection.

Nearly 40% of the chapters are devoted to clinical problems, and the mix of clinical information and basic science should appeal to the interested clinician. The book is well illustrated with numerous tables, diagrams, electron micrographs, and histopathology sections. There are 16 colour photographs of common clinical conditions, though it does not set out to be a definitive clinical atlas.

As I have already inferred, the book is extremely well referenced and contains most of the definitive early references on the subject. This in itself would be one reason to acquire it, and it is without doubt a useful authoritative work for those working with all aspects of HIV. It is, however, let down by a rather scanty index of only 11 pages. In addition the editor claims that "all sections have been updated through the beginning of this year to include the most recent relevant references to the topics". Unfortunately that statement is undated and, as the book was published in 1989, I can only assume that the year referred to was 1988. In fact 10 of the 21 chapters contain no references from 1988, a startling omission for most topics.

The purpose of the book, according to the editor, Dr Levy, "was to review the historic events leading to the recognition of AIDS and to describe the many facets of the virus

and the disease complex". On the whole the book has fulfilled its purpose, and its major deficiencies relate to the paucity of data presented regarding the two largest risk activities. I suspect that the price will unfortunately limit its appeal in the UK to enthusiasts and libraries only, but I recommended it for this purpose.

R P Brett

Common problems in dermatology. By Kenneth E Greer. (Pp 437; price not given.) Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1988

This book is based on a series of 64 case histories commented on by 71 specialists—perhaps the ultimate in multiauthorship for a book of only 437 pages! There are two types of book on a specialist subject: one gives an overview or interpretation for the non-specialist; the other deals in depth with specific topics, presupposing a background knowledge of the speciality concerned. In some respects this book falls between the two in that it inevitably cannot provide enough material for an in depth discussion for the specialist, whereas those not familiar with dermatological conditions will be left with some ideas about problems in specific conditions, but not an overall picture. For dermatologists this could prove frustrating in view of the limited space for discussion of each condition. On the other hand "the physicians (presumably non-dermatologists) who cope with skin ailments" for whom the book is intended may find that its usefulness is limited by a lack of information on criteria for diagnosis and basic clinical descriptions.

The case histories are brief, generally only three or four lines long, followed by as many pages of comment. This format can be very instructive—when a case is presented at a hospital grand round, for example. Inevitably

the comment from an author when writing without the benefit of live discussion is more restricted. In general, however, most comments are clear, succinct, and informative, and the contributors make good use of the space allocated to them.

Most chapters deal with a single clinical entity, such as psoriasis, herpes, or keratoacanthoma. Others take an important physical sign, such as mouth ulcers, and discuss the various possible causes. It is interesting to see how large subjects are dealt with in a limited space. For example contact dermatitis is covered by discussing only eyelid and periorbital dermatitis based on the author's study of 25 cases. By limiting discussion to one specific type of dermatitis the principles of diagnosis and treatment are elucidated clearly, and it is then up to the reader to apply them to other situations. This is preferable to merely providing lists of causes, as occurs in a few of the contributions. There is a list of no less than 63 associations with paronychia, most of which could simply be summed up as "trauma". Some treatments suggested are controversial or not generally accepted (such as the use of corticosteroids by mouth for hirsutism) but in general the options for managing each condition are sound and well presented.

It is always difficult to allocate the appropriate amount of space between rare and common conditions. On the whole the authors and editor succeed well, although I wonder why the same amount of space is given to epidermolysis bullosa (which is encountered rarely) as Raynaud's phenomenon (which is much more common). None the less it provides a useful discussion of clinical features and of treatment once the diagnosis has been established.

This is an interesting and useful book that has clearly received a great deal of thought and time. For genitourinary doctors it is a book that is more likely to be consulted in the library than read at home.

P K Buxton